

TOP STORY

DELHI, MONDAY 02, FEBRUARY 2026

VOL-12, ISSUE - 292, PAGES - 8, PRICE ₹ 3.50 | POSTAL REG. NO. UP/GBD-254/2022-2024



Wanted to be a criminologist before I became actor: 'Daldal' star Samara Tijori



145 terrorists 17 security personnel killed in Pakistan's Balochistan

Jos Buttler becomes most capped player for England in international cricket



FILM

PAGE-8

WORLD

PAGE-7

SPORTS

PAGE-6

2 NATIONAL

Budget turbo-charges momentum to bolster India's position on global stage: Amit Shah

3 DELHI

Road rage turns violent as lawyer beaten in Delhi's Mukherjee Nagar

5 STATE

Union Budget sparks big push for Haryana's growth: CM Saini



6 NATIONAL

Carlos Alcaraz beats Novak Djokovic to become the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam

7 BUSINESS

FM proposes rationalisation of employer contributions of PF trusts



WEATHER

Sunrise 7:10 AM
Sunset 6:01 PM
Moonrise 6:34 PM
Moonset 8:03 AM

Today's Prediction
Maximum 21°C | Minimum 11°C
Tomorrow's Prediction
21°C | 11°C

'ALL INCLUSIVE BUDGET!'

Union Budget 2026-27 Lays Long-Term Growth Blueprint with Big Push to Manufacturing, Railways, Defence and Healthcare

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday presented the Union Budget 2026-27 with a total outlay of ₹33.5 lakh crore, outlining what the government described as a long-term roadmap to sustain economic growth amid rising global uncertainties. Presenting her record ninth consecutive Budget in the Lok Sabha, Sitharaman focused on manufacturing, infrastructure, fiscal consolidation, healthcare, defence modernisation and rail connectivity, while largely avoiding populist measures despite key state elections on the horizon.

In a nearly 90-minute speech, the finance minister said the Budget seeks to balance ambition with inclusion as India navigates a challenging global environment marked by geopolitical tensions, supply-chain disruptions and financial tightening. She reiterated the government's commitment to the vision of "Viksit Bharat", emphasising employment generation, technology-led growth and deeper integration with global markets.

A major thrust of the Budget is on boosting domestic manufacturing across seven priority sectors—pharmaceuticals, semiconductors, rare-earth magnets, chemicals, capital goods, textiles and sports goods. Sitharaman announced that manufacturing capacities will be scaled up with a strong emphasis on job creation and technology-driven development. The success of electronics manufacturing, particularly Apple's iPhone production in India, has prompted the government to double the outlay for electronics manufacturing to ₹40,000 crore. She also announced a second phase of the semiconductor mission to strengthen domestic supply chains.

Capital expenditure remains a central pillar of the government's growth strategy. For 2026-27, capital expenditure has been raised to ₹12.2 lakh crore, up from ₹11.2 lakh crore in the current fiscal, maintaining the focus on infrastructure-led expansion. Among the headline announcements was a



Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman shows the digital tablet, enclosed in a traditional red 'bahi-khata' style pouch, at the Parliament premises before presenting of the 'Union Budget 2026-27' in New Delhi, Sunday, Feb. 1, 2026. Minister of State for Finance Pankaj Chaudhary and senior officials of the ministry also seen.



I think there is enough to cover all these election states. Had I done so (allocations for poll-bound states), you would have asked why I made allotments only for the election states. Now, I have done it for both election and non-election states, if you want me to spell out what is being done only for the election states, I am quite happy to do it.

NIRMALA SITHARAMAN



The Budget will further empower the poor, the 'annadata', youth and women. "It is a budget to strengthen villages, to increase farmers' income, and promote 'Aatmanirbhar Bharat' and 'Make in India' initiatives.

NARENDRA MODI



From manufacturing to infrastructure, from health to tourism, from rural areas to AI, from sports to pilgrimage sites, #ViksitBharatBudget is a budget that empowers the dreams of the youth, women, and farmers of every village, every town, and every city, enabling them to realise those dreams.

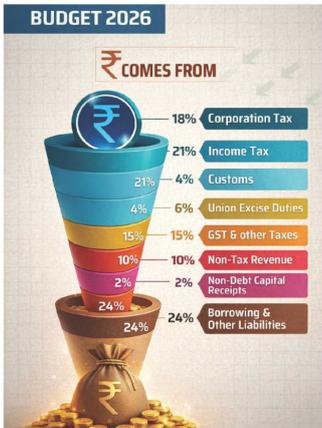
AMIT SHAH



This Budget is directionless, visionless, actionless and anti-people. It is also anti-woman, anti-farmer, anti-education and against the SC, ST and OBC communities... There is nothing on offer for Bengal in the Humpty Dumpty Budget.

MAMATA BANERJEE

WEST BENGAL CHIEF MINISTER



UNION BUDGET 2026-27

WHAT'S CHEAPER

- Personal use imported goods
- 17 drugs or medicines for cancer patients
- Drugs, medicines and Food for Special Medical Purposes (FSMP) for 7 rare diseases
- Leather items (footwear)
- Textile garments
- Seafood products
- Tour package (overseas)
- Lithium-Ion Cells for batteries
- Solar glass
- Critical minerals
- Biogas-blended CNG
- Aircraft manufacturing components
- Microwave oven
- Foreign education

Note: The list is made out of the budget presented in the Parliament, which is yet to be approved in both Lower and Upper Houses.

plan to develop seven high-speed rail corridors across the country, alongside continued investment in roads, ports and logistics. Defence expenditure has also seen a sharp increase, reflecting heightened security concerns and the

government's push for modernisation and indigenousisation. Despite expectations of changes in personal income-tax slabs, the Budget refrained from making major alterations. Instead, Sitharaman announced a series of tax and incentive measures aimed at improving ease of compliance and boosting investment. These include steps to simplify the customs regime, rationalise exemptions and reduce duties on select imports. Duties have been waived

on 17 life-saving cancer drugs, baggage rules have been eased, and duty on personal imports has been reduced to 10 per cent. However, a hike in securities transaction tax on equity derivatives unsettled equity mar-

BUDGET 2026: Customs Duty Changes

PRODUCT	CURRENT RATE	NEW RATE	CHANGE	SECTORS LIKELY IMPACTED
Monazite (Critical Minerals)	2.50%	NIL	DECREASE	Critical Minerals, Mining, Rare Earth Processing
Sodium antimonate for use in manufacture of solar glass	7.50%	NIL	DECREASE	Renewable Energy - Solar glass manufacturing
Specified capital goods for manufacture of Li-ion cells for Battery Energy Storage Systems	As Applicable	NIL	DECREASE	Renewable Energy - Battery Storage
All goods for generation of nuclear power including control and protector absorber rods, burnable absorber rods	7.50%	NIL	DECREASE	Nuclear Energy
Specified goods for use in the manufacture of Microwave Ovens	As Applicable	NIL	DECREASE	Electronics
Components/parts including engines of aircraft for manufacture of aircraft	As Applicable	NIL	DECREASE	Civil Aviation
Raw materials for manufacture/repair/overhaul of aircraft (including engines) imported by PSUs under Ministry of Defense	As Applicable	NIL	DECREASE	Defense
Seventeen new drugs/medicines	5% / 10%	NIL	DECREASE	Drugs / Medicines
All dutiable goods imported for personal use	10% / 20%	15% / 10%	DECREASE	Personal Imports
Potassium Hydrosulfide	NIL	7.50%	INCREASE	Chemical
Umbrellas (other than garden umbrellas)	20%	20% or ₹60/piece*	MODIFICATION/ INCREASE	Consumer Product

Source: Deloitte India *whichever is higher

Budget 2026: 7 New High-Speed Rail Corridors Announced

- Delhi-Varanasi HSR Corridor
- Varanasi-Siliguri HSR Corridor
- Mumbai-Pune HSR Corridor
- Pune-Hyderabad HSR Corridor
- Hyderabad-Bengaluru HSR Corridor
- Hyderabad-Chennai HSR Corridor
- Chennai-Bengaluru HSR Corridor

kets. During the special budget-day trading session, benchmark indices fell by as much as 2 per cent before recovering some ground. The STT on futures trading has been raised to 0.05 per cent from 0.02 per cent, while that on options has been increased to 0.15 per cent from 0.01 per cent. At a post-Budget press conference, Sitharaman defended the move, saying it was intended to discourage excessive speculative trading by small investors.

A key industry-focused announcement was a ₹10,000 crore investment over five years to develop India as a global biopharma manufacturing hub. The Budget also proposed investments in rare-earth corridors, textile parks, container manufacturing, chemical parks and the revival of 200 legacy industrial clusters. These measures, the government said, would strengthen domestic capabilities and boost exports.

One of the most significant tax incentives announced was a 20-year

CONTD ON PAGE-2

'ALL INCLUSIVE BUDGET!'

CONTD FROM PAGE 2

On the fiscal front, the government reaffirmed its commitment to consolidation. The fiscal deficit is targeted at 4.3 per cent of GDP in 2026-27, down from 4.4 per cent, while the debt-to-GDP ratio is projected to decline to 55.6 per cent from 56.1 per cent. The government plans to borrow ₹17.2 lakh crore from bond markets in the next fiscal year.

The Budget also included measures to support agriculture, livestock, fisheries and high-value farming, alongside incentives for textiles and leather exports. Tourism receives a boost through proposals for eco-friendly mountain trails in Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Jammu and Kashmir, and the development of 15 archaeological sites across the country.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi hailed the Budget as "historic", saying it reflects the aspirations of 140 crore Indians and provides a clear roadmap towards Viksit Bharat by 2047. Describing it as a "highway of opportunities", Modi said the Budget would give fresh momentum to India's reform journey and help the country move towards becoming the world's third-largest economy.

A substantial allocation has been made to strengthen the criminal justice and forensic ecosystem. The government has set aside over ₹1,471 crore for modernisation of forensic capabilities, including ₹500 crore for forensic capacity-building under schemes for women's safety. Additional funds have been earmarked for upgrading Central Forensic Science Laboratories, establishing a National Forensic Data Centre, strengthening the National Forensic Infrastructure Enhancement Scheme and expanding the Inter-Operable Criminal Justice System to enable seamless data sharing among police, courts and forensic agencies.

Railways emerged as one of the biggest beneficiaries of the Budget. Finance Minister Sitharaman allocated ₹2,77,830 crore for capital expenditure to the Ministry of Railways in 2026-27, a 10.25 per cent increase over the previous year and the highest ever. An additional ₹15,000 crore will come from extra-budgetary resources. Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav said the seven proposed high-speed rail corridors and a new dedicated freight corridor between Dankuni and Surat would transform the country's transportation sector.

According to Vaishnav, the proposed high-speed rail corridors will connect Mumbai-Pune, Pune-Hyderabad, Hyderabad-Bengaluru, Chennai-Bengaluru, Delhi-Varanasi and Varnasi-Siliguri. He said these projects would drastically reduce travel times and act as major growth multipliers. The Chennai-Bengaluru-Hyderabad corridor is expected to form a southern high-speed triangle, benefiting five states and the Union Territory of Puducherry.

FOR ADVERTISING IN

TOP STORY PLEASE CONTACT: 9818799941

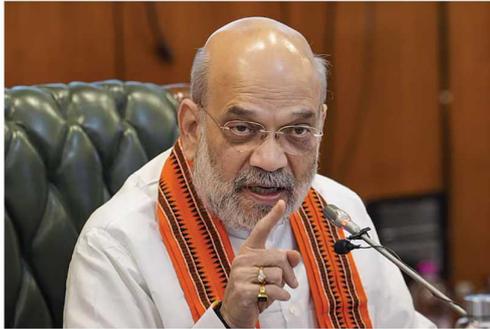
Budget turbocharges momentum to bolster India's position on global stage: Amit Shah

Union Home Minister Amit Shah said the Budget announced on Sunday "turbocharges the momentum" to bolster India's position on the global stage as the most-attractive investment destination for a wide range of sectors, from traditional to the new-age ones.

"From manufacturing to infrastructure, from health to tourism, from rural areas to AI, from sports to pilgrimage sites, #ViksitBharatBudget is a budget that empowers the dreams of the youth, women, and farmers of every village, every town, and every city, enabling them to realise those dreams," Shah said in a series of posts on X.

Congratulating Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman for the "resounding reaffirmation" of the BJP-led government's commitment to driving growth and development with fiscal prudence, Shah said the budget fulfils the target of keeping the fiscal deficit below 4.5 per cent.

He said the Budget reflects the vision of a developed India by 2047



and the roadmap for the next 25 years.

The home minister said by allocating Rs 12.2 lakh crore for capital expenditure, the Budget has given impetus to the prime minister's vision of a future-ready India, where development extends beyond major cities.

He said "reaching Tier-2 and Tier-3 cities through new rail corridors, national waterways and improved connectivity will boost job creation, taking India's aspirations to new heights."

"#ViksitBharatBudget will give unprecedented

momentum to connectivity in India. Seven high-speed rail corridors announced today aimed at supercharging inter-city connectivity and slashing down travel time across key economic and population centres of our country," Shah said.

He said through the Budget 2026-27, Modi has proven that "Aatmanirbhar" and "Viksit Bharat" are not just slogans, but the resolve of his government.

"This budget not only provides a clear blueprint for empowering every sector, every class,

and every citizen, but also offers a grounded vision to encourage it, which will support it at every step. #ViksitBharatBudget is a vision for building an India that leads in every field in the world," he said.

Shah said a historic decision has been taken in the Budget to launch the Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj Yojana to realise Gandhi's dream of Gram Swaraj. "This will strengthen the rural economy and provide new support to weavers, farmers and the handloom industry," he added.

The home minister said the decision to benefit three crore farmers through the Coconut Promotion Scheme in coastal areas, promote production and export of cashew and coconut, and conserve sandalwood clearly demonstrates that the prime minister is fully committed to ensuring the prosperity of farmers and making agriculture a profitable enterprise.

"A visionary decision has been taken in the #ViksitBharatBudget to increase farmers' income through livestock. Increasing the number of veterinarians, expanding veterinary centres and training centres will strengthen the livestock-based economy," he said.

Shah said decisions such as providing credit-

linked subsidies for the dairy and poultry sectors, developing 500 reservoirs to promote fisheries and providing access to global markets will prove to be milestones in the direction of the Modi government's resolve to increase farmers' income.

"#ViksitBharatBudget embodies Bharat as a nation forging its new identity as an emerging economic power centre with resolute trust in its own strengths. Post-Covid, PM @narendramodi J's visionary economic policies have fuelled the Indian economy. #ViksitBharatBudget turbocharges the momentum to bolster India's position on the global stage as the most attractive investment destination for a wide range of sectors, from traditional to the new-age ones," he said.

The senior Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leader said by making micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs) the champions of India's growth story, the Budget realises the prime minister's vision of strengthening the economy from the grassroots level through a clear tripartite framework with a Rs 10,000 crore growth fund.

SomShekhar Gaudappanour takes charge as Karnataka MNREGA body Chief



TSN/New Delhi

The All India Labour MNREGA Monitoring Committee on Saturday appointed Mr. SomShekhar Gaudappanour as the President of its Karnataka state unit at a formal ceremony held at the Constitution Club of India on Rafi Marg, New Delhi. The appointment marks a significant step in strengthening the organisation's presence and activities in Karnataka.

During the event, National President of the committee, Mr. Pramod Tyagi, formally handed over the appointment letter to Mr. Gaudappanour. Addressing the gathering, Mr. Tyagi expressed confidence in the newly appointed state president, saying that Mr. SomShekhar's consistent efforts and active involvement in social causes would help advance the organisation's mission. He said the committee expects dedicated leadership from him in safeguarding the rights and welfare of MNREGA workers and in expanding the organisation's grassroots reach in the state.

Mr. Tyagi further noted that the All India Labour MNREGA Monitoring Committee has been working at both national and state levels to address issues faced by MNREGA workers and to ensure effective implementation of the scheme. With Mr. Gaudappanour taking charge in Karnataka, the organisation hopes to soon see the formation of district- and block-level committees leading to a strong and well-coordinated organisational structure across the state under the guidance of the central leadership.

After assuming his responsibilities, Mr. SomShekhar Gaudappanour assured the gathering that he would work tirelessly for the benefit of MNREGA workers. He said protecting workers' rights and strengthening the organisation at the grassroots level would be his priority, and he would strive to take the committee's objectives to every corner of Karnataka.

tion's grassroots reach in the state.

Mr. Tyagi further noted that the All India Labour MNREGA Monitoring Committee has been working at both national and state levels to address issues faced by MNREGA workers and to ensure effective implementation of the scheme. With Mr. Gaudappanour taking charge in Karnataka, the organisation hopes to soon see the formation of district- and block-level committees leading to a strong and well-coordinated organisational structure across the state under the guidance of the central leadership.

After assuming his responsibilities, Mr. SomShekhar Gaudappanour assured the gathering that he would work tirelessly for the benefit of MNREGA workers. He said protecting workers' rights and strengthening the organisation at the grassroots level would be his priority, and he would strive to take the committee's objectives to every corner of Karnataka.

Indira IVF Deepens Mumbai Footprint with New Fertility Clinic in Malad

TSN/Mumbai

Indira IVF Hospital Limited has expanded its presence in Mumbai with the inauguration of a new fertility clinic in Malad, further strengthening access to organised fertility and reproductive healthcare in the city's western suburbs.

The newly launched centre, located at Anupam Apartment on SV Road in Malad (West), is designed to provide comprehensive fertility and IVF services under one roof. The clinic will function in line with Indira IVF's standardised clinical protocols, supported by technology-enabled systems and a multidisciplinary medical team to ensure consistent and quality-driven patient care.

The inauguration ceremony was held on Sunday in the presence of senior leadership and clinicians from Indira IVF. Dr Kanika Kalyani, Senior Executive Director, Indira IVF Borivali, attended the event as Chief Guest, while Dr Rincy Sreedharan, Senior Executive Director, Indira IVF Bhandup, was the Guest of Honour.

Speaking at the launch, Dr Kanika Kalyani said that expanding access to fertility care goes beyond physical infrastructure. She emphasised that the Malad clinic would help build patient trust through



transparent communication, standardised treatment protocols and experienced medical teams, enabling families in this part of Mumbai to access reliable fertility care closer to home.

Managing Director of Indira IVF Hospital Limited, Mr Nitiz Murtia, said Mumbai continues to witness a rising demand for timely and dependable fertility services, as more individuals and couples seek early guidance for reproductive health. He said the Malad centre reflects the organisation's ongoing effort to bring structured and consistent fertility treatment nearer to patients while main-

taining uniform clinical standards across its national network.

Dr Rincy Sreedharan said that fertility treatment often depends on continuity of care and timely medical intervention. He added that the presence of a dedicated Indira IVF centre in Malad would help reduce treatment delays and improve the overall experience for patients by offering specialised support within their own neighbourhood.

Dr Bhargavi Vilas Dube, Gynaecologist and IVF Specialist and Centre Head at Indira IVF Malad, said the focus of the new clinic would be on providing consistent medical

guidance in a supportive and sensitive clinical environment. She said the centre aims to help patients navigate their fertility journey with clarity and evidence-based treatment while ensuring continuity of care at every stage.

With the launch of the Malad clinic, Indira IVF continues to expand its national footprint, adding to its network of 169 clinics across India. The new centre will offer a full range of fertility and assisted reproductive services for both male and female infertility, supported by standardised laboratory practices, electronic medical records and robust patient safety systems.

With the launch of the Malad clinic, Indira IVF continues to expand its national footprint, adding to its network of 169 clinics across India. The new centre will offer a full range of fertility and assisted reproductive services for both male and female infertility, supported by standardised laboratory practices, electronic medical records and robust patient safety systems.

With the launch of the Malad clinic, Indira IVF continues to expand its national footprint, adding to its network of 169 clinics across India. The new centre will offer a full range of fertility and assisted reproductive services for both male and female infertility, supported by standardised laboratory practices, electronic medical records and robust patient safety systems.

On 50th Raising Day Rajnath praises Coast Guard's role during Operation Sindoor

New Delhi

Defence Minister Rajnath Singh on Sunday praised the role of the Indian Coast Guard during last year's Operation Sindoor, saying the maritime force had forward deployed its strategic assets and maintained a "high alert" in the coastal and creek areas.

Raised on February 1, 1977, the ICG was envisioned to address emerging maritime challenges and safeguard India's expanding marine interests.

In his address, Singh enumerated the various key roles played by the ICG, from patrolling the seas to ensuring maritime security, and from saving lives to responding to natural disasters.



effectuated under an environment of heightened

maritime sensitivity," he said.

Operation Sindoor re-established the role of the ICG as a front-line force, and for inter-services coordination, in India's multi-layer national security system, Singh said.

The defence minister said that the ICG, under a "fast and firm response", forward deployed its strategic assets, increased vigilance on the Western Coast, and maintained a high alert in the coastal and creek areas.

Operation Sindoor re-established the role of the ICG as a front-line force, and for inter-services coordination, in India's multi-layer national security system, Singh said.

For Defence, Sanjay Seth, Defence Secretary R K Singh, Navy Chief Admiral Dinesh K Tripathi and Director General, ICG, Paramesh Sivamani, were present at the event hosted at the Bharat Mandapam here.

A commemorative stamp was also released on the occasion. Established in 1977 with just seven surface platforms, the ICG has evolved into a formidable maritime force comprising 155 ships and 80 aircraft, officials said.

Budget speaks for itself claims BJP

New Delhi

The BJP on Sunday hailed the Union Budget as a "step forward" towards making India developed as it slammed the opposition parties for calling it "lacklustre" and "hollow", saying the government does not need any certificate from them because people trust Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

The BJP's retort came after the opposition parties expressed dissatisfaction with the Budget, with the Congress alleging that it fell woefully short of the hype generated around it.

While Leader of Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi, called the Budget "blind to India's real crises", Congress MP and party general secretary (organisation) K Venkatesh said it's "completely hollow".

Other opposition MPs alleged that while the Budget did not have any announcements for the common people, it also failed to address basic issues like education, healthcare and unemployment.

Hitting back, Union Minister Piyush Goyal alleged that the opposition parties start playing the same record after every budget.

"You tell me what is wrong. Don't they want progress of our MSME sector, increase in production capacity in the country, ensure a bright future of those in the cattle rearing and fishing sectors, new jobs, skill development... What is their problem?" he said while replying to queries from reporters at Parliament House complex.

"This is a future-ready budget for India," the senior BJP leader said.

"This is 'truly' a Budget that lays the foundation for India to achieve the goal of a 'Viksit Bharat' by 2047, he added.

Reacting sharply to the opposition's charge, Union minister Giriraj Singh said, "We have not brought the Budget for the opposition. This budget has been brought for the common and its people, including the poor, youth and the unemployed."

"People of the country trust Prime Minister Modi. So we do not need any certificate from the opposition," he told reporters in the Parliament House complex.

"All the provisions have been made for the common people only. If those in the opposition do not consider themselves common people, what can we do?" he said.

PUBLIC NOTICE

It is for general information that I, Gulzar Khan s/o Akhtar Khan residing at A/10 C/2255, Yamuna Vihar, North East, Delhi-110053 declare that name of my father has been wrongly written in my father's and his 10th class educational documents. The actual name of my father is Akhtar Khan which may be amended accordingly.

PUBLIC NOTICE

IT IS INFORMED TO THE PUBLIC AT LARGE THAT MY CLIENT DAMODER PRASAD (UID: 2630 5231 1959 580 PARSKELEPRASAD R/S HOUSE NUMBER 170 AND 171A GROUND FLOOR, MEERA ENCLAVE PART-2, RANIGALLA, SOUTH WEST DELHI, DELHI-110041) EVICT HIS SON NAMED MANISH, DAUGHTER-IN-LAW NAMED FROM ALL HIS MOVABLE & IMMOVABLE PROPERTIES DUE TO THEIR BAD HABIT AND QUARREL-SOME TEMPERAMENT/ CONDUCT AND ILLIBERAL ACTS AND NO TAKE CASE. ADVOCATE SHIMSHER OFFICE ADDRESS: LAXMI GURDAS, TUDA MANDI TERHIL, DELHI-110043 MOBILE NO 981731279

Health check drive for Delhi MLAs begins from today

New Delhi:

The annual health checkup of members of the Delhi Legislative Assembly will be conducted at Parmanand Hospital in Kashmere Gate from February 2 to 14 under the existing health scheme of the Government of the National Capital Territory of Delhi (GNCTD), Speaker Vijender Gupta said on Sunday.

Gupta said regular health assessments were an important part of preventive health-care and an institutional responsibility, helping ensure continuity and efficiency in the functioning of public bodies.

He said the exercise was a routine annual process carried out in line with prescribed government norms and timelines, and did not involve any special treatment, concession or new entitlement for the legislators.

Road rage turns violent as lawyer beaten in Delhi's Mukherjee Nagar

New Delhi:

An advocate practising in the Delhi High Court was allegedly assaulted and beaten with sticks by five to six men in an apparent road rage incident involving a black Thar and an SUV near northwest Delhi's Mukherjee Nagar, an official said on Sunday.

The incident took place around 8.45 pm on January 25 near a restaurant in the area, adding that the accused are yet to be arrested.

The complainant, 29, a resident of Noida Extension in Uttar Pradesh and practising in the Delhi High Court, told police that the assault followed a brief altercation over the Thar blocking his car in a narrow lane.

"I had gone to Mukherjee Nagar to meet a client and was driving my SUV when a black Thar, bearing a Haryana registration number,



Road rage turns violent as lawyer beaten in Delhi - File Photo

stopped abruptly in front of my vehicle at a turn," the FIR read.

He claimed that the Thar completely blocked the passage for his car. After waiting

for nearly five minutes, he managed to squeeze his car out from the right side, after which the Thar driver allegedly began hurling abuses at him.

"When I got down from my car and objected to the verbal abuse, the Thar driver threatened to kill me. When I told him that I will call the police, the

The complainant, 29, a resident of Noida Extension in Uttar Pradesh and practising in the Delhi High Court, told police that the assault followed a brief altercation over the Thar blocking his car in a narrow lane.

accused shut his vehicle windows, spoke on the phone and drove a short distance ahead before stopping again and continued to hurl abuses," the complainant told police.

He said by then, a crowd had gathered at the spot, and someone advised him not to engage and instead inform the police. A friend of the complainant had reached the spot by then, and the two were walking back to their car to call the police when the Thar driver allegedly returned with five to six associates.

February opens on a cooler note in the Capital

New Delhi:

Delhi saw a colder start to February, compared to last year, with the maximum temperature settling at 24.6 degrees Celsius on Sunday, according to the Indian Meteorological Department.

The maximum temperature on Sunday is lower than last year's 26.2 degrees Celsius while 2.3 notches above the seasonal average, according to official data.

According to the weather department, the minimum temperature settled at 12.1 degrees Celsius, while Palam recorded 10.6 degrees Celsius.

Lodhi Road logged 11.8 degrees Celsius, the Ridge 12.1 degrees Celsius and Ayazgar 11.6 degrees Celsius.

Maximum temperatures in the city ranged from 22.6 to 24.6 degrees Celsius.

Among the stations, Safdarjung recorded the

highest maximum temperature at 24.6 degrees Celsius, followed by Ayazgar at 23.6 degrees Celsius and the Ridge at 23.6 degrees Celsius, while Lodhi Road logged a high of 23.7 degrees Celsius, and Palam recorded 22.6 degrees Celsius.

The relative humidity stood at 82 per cent at 5.30 pm.

According to the IMD, rainfall over northwest India, including Delhi, Haryana and Chandigarh, is likely to remain below the Long Period Average in February.

Long Period Average refers to the average rainfall or temperature for a region, calculated using weather data from around thirty years, and is used as a benchmark for normal climatic conditions for a given period.

The weather department has forecast above-normal minimum and maximum temperatures during the month, indicating fewer cold nights and warmer afternoons as winter conditions recede earlier than usual.

Mega Jan Sunwai in Janakpuri Highlights Sood's Push for People-Centric Governance



Diksha, New Delhi

Delhi Education Minister and Janakpuri MLA Ashish Sood on Saturday organised a large-scale 'Mega Jan Sunwai' programme at Golwalkar Vatika in Janakpuri, marking the first integrated public grievance hearing of its kind in any Delhi Assembly constituency. The initiative, held under the banner 'Administration at Your Doorstep', brought together 20 government departments at a single venue to ensure on-the-spot and time-bound resolution of civic complaints.

Addressing residents of Ward C-104, Sood said the government's objective was to resolve all grievances received during the Jan Sunwai within three weeks. Emphasising a shift in governance approach, he said the administration must reach citizens instead of people being forced to visit multiple government offices. He added that providing basic civic amenities in Janakpuri was a top priority and that long-pending issues would now be addressed in a permanent and structured manner.

Officials from key departments, including MCD, PWD, Delhi Jal Board, BSES, Forest Department, Pollution Control Committee, Delhi Police, Traffic Police, Fire Services, Education, Pension and Licensing, were present to ensure coordinated and immediate redressal of public concerns.

During the programme, Sood issued priority directions on contaminated water

supply, sewer blockages, waterlogging in toilets, waste management, and maintenance of sewer lines and reservoirs

supply, sewer blockages, waterlogging in toilets, waste management, and maintenance of sewer lines and reservoirs. He also reviewed power infrastructure and directed repairs of damaged electricity poles, installation of new transformers and streetlights, and prompt resolution of billing and power-cut complaints.

On traffic and road safety, directions were issued for action against illegal parking near Janakpuri South Metro Station, construction of speed breakers, installation of traffic signals, and barricading of unsafe roadworks. Sood also highlighted a ₹48-crore trenchless sewer project in C-Block, expected to provide a long-term solution to sewerage problems for the next 40-50 years.

Reiterating the government's commitment to transparency, participation and accountability, Sood said similar Mega Jan Sunwai programmes would be organised in other wards to strengthen citizen engagement and deliver people-centric governance at the grassroots level.



Government of Haryana

In Memory of The Music Maestro Pandit Jasraj Ji

State Level Programme

◀ Chief Guest ▶

Sh. Nayab Singh Saini

Chief Minister, Haryana

February 2, 2026 | 1:00 PM | Pili Mandori, Fatehabad

You are cordially invited

“Music, ‘sura’ and ‘svara’ are considered immortal in our country. Pandit Jasraj Ji has lived music throughout his life and that has been echoing in every particle of his existence, remains immortal in the energy and consciousness of the Universe even after leaving the body.”

- Narendra Modi






Scan the QR code to join the programme

Information, Public Relations & Languages Department, Haryana | www.prharyana.gov.in | [Follow us on](#)

Budget 2026 on a tightrope

The Union Budget 2026, presented in Parliament today, February 1, 2026, once again demonstrated the government's narrow path between economic discipline and public aspirations. Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman began her speech with a vision of stability, continuity, and long-term growth. There were no unexpected populist announcements; instead, the budget adopted a realistic approach. The fiscal deficit was kept at 4.4 percent of gross domestic product (GDP) for fiscal year 2026, below the previously set target of 4.5 percent. This move sets a strong example of fiscal discipline. Capital expenditure was increased from ₹11.2 lakh crore last year to ₹12.5 lakh crore, representing an increase of nearly 12 percent. This increase is focused on infrastructure, urban development projects, and the digital technology sector. A target of raising ₹10 lakh crore has been set under the asset monetization scheme to encourage private sector investment.

The Indian economy achieved 6.8 percent growth in the last fiscal year, but challenges such as the global economic slowdown, US-China trade tensions, and domestic inflation persist. The budget tightly controlled the fiscal deficit at 4.4 percent, while the effective revenue deficit was limited to ₹96,654 crore, a mere 0.3 percent of GDP. A provision of ₹12.5 lakh crore for capital expenditure will give new impetus to the national infrastructure pipeline. The target of an additional 50,000 kilometers for highway construction and an allocation of ₹2.5 lakh crore for railway electrification and modernization demonstrate the commitment to laying the foundation for the future. States will be provided with ₹1.5 lakh crore in 50-year interest-free loans, strengthening the federal structure. Measures such as tax exemptions, a single-window system, and faster approval processes have been implemented to promote the public-private partnership (PPP) model. The government has sent a clear message: investors, come, we are fully prepared. But the big question is whether these huge investments will create jobs in rural and semi-urban areas, or will they remain confined to the glitz of the metropolises?

The middle class, which contributes approximately 40 percent to the country's GDP, received substantial tax relief in this budget. The standard deduction in the old tax system was doubled from Rs 50,000 to Rs 1 lakh, while it is more generous for senior citizens. The new tax system simplified the tax slabs—zero tax on income up to Rs 5 lakh. TCS on education loans was removed (up to Rs 10 lakh), while the rent TDS threshold was raised from Rs 2.4 lakh to Rs 6 lakh. Tax relief was provided on two self-occupied residential properties, and the deadline for filing income tax returns was extended from two years to four years. The promise to simplify the tax code from 819 sections to 536 is commendable. These steps are aimed at transforming taxpayers from a mere source of revenue to a trusted partner. However, compliance processes must be further simplified at the ground level, otherwise these reliefs may remain limited to mere paperwork.

By Dr. Priyanka Saurabh



PhD (Political Science), is a poet and social thinker.



The budget focused on the agricultural sector, which still accounts for 18 percent of GDP and 65 percent of the rural population. The Pradhan Mantri Dhananya Yojana was expanded to 100 districts, encouraging crop diversification and increasing irrigation and storage capacity. The PM Kisan Samman Nidhi was increased, and the Kisan Credit Card limit was raised. Economic zones were declared in the An-

daman and Lakshadweep for fisheries development, with provisions to strengthen the fruit and vegetable supply chain. The MNRREGA budget was increased, and the rural credit scoring system facilitated loans to self-help groups (SHGs). The leather, footwear, and toy industries are projected to generate 2.2 million new jobs. These provisions will boost the rural economy, but the real test will be whether these schemes will move beyond paper and reach farms and markets. Small and marginal farmers should benefit, not be limited to large landowners.

Prioritizing women's empowerment, the Lakshmi

Vandana Yojana has been expanded, and guarantees on self-employment loans (up to ₹20 lakh) have been removed. Home-based work for urban women will benefit from tax exemptions. A special provision of ₹10,000 crore for Panchayati Raj institutions will promote real leadership in states like Haryana, where women's reservation is 50 percent. These steps are important towards gender equality, but effective implementation at the Panchayat level will be essential.

To empower 60 percent of the country's youth population (under 35 years), a budget of over ₹1.35 lakh crore has been allocated for the education sector, including the establishment of 50 new IITs and medical colleges. ₹2 lakh crore has been allocated for the Skill India program, and an internship scheme will provide ₹1 lakh monthly stipends to 50 million youth. Support for micro, small, and medium enterprises (MSMEs) and an employment-focused development model. There is a strong determination to bring the unemployment rate below 8 percent. An allocation of ₹50,000 crore to the Startup India Fund will encourage youth entrepreneurship. But the question remains: will these efforts lead to job creation, or will the younger generation continue to wander aimlessly in search of jobs?

In the areas of technology and innovation, the establishment of an artificial intelligence (AI) center, a revenue target of 2 lakh crore rupees from the 5G spectrum auction, and 1 lakh crore rupees for Digital India, 5 lakh crore rupees for clean energy—solar parks and green hydrogen production, 100 percent insurance on foreign direct investment (FDI). The Public Trust Bill 2.0 simplifies over 100 outdated laws. These steps are part of a strategy to make India a developed nation by 2047, but the digital divide must be bridged so that rural areas are not deprived of technology.

Finally, the challenges are not insignificant. Keeping inflation under control at 5.5 percent and curbing food inflation. Strengthening border security with a defense budget of ₹6.5 lakh crore. ₹1 lakh crore for environmental protection, export promotion, and innovation. The budget has set the direction clear—now, the speed and integrity of implementation will determine the outcome.

Budget 2026 is a realistic roadmap across 10 key areas, focusing on the poor, farmers, youth, and women. It not only raises hopes but also questions. The real test will be implementation—the direction is clear, now it's time to demonstrate speed!

BUDGET REACTIONS

Budget 2026: Clear Focus on Employment, Infrastructure and Exports

The Union Budget 2026-27 does not directly impact day-to-day prices for the common citizen, as excise duty and service tax—which earlier influenced what became cheaper or costlier—are no longer part of the Budget framework. These have been subsumed under GST, which is governed separately.

The Budget is clearly aimed at accelerating economic growth. A strong push has been given to infrastructure through higher public capital expenditure, while fiscal discipline has been maintained with the fiscal deficit capped at 4.3%. Further reduction in corporate tax reflects the Government's intent to encourage investment and strengthen industry confidence.

From an employment perspective, the Budget places strong emphasis on the MSME sector, with a special focus on textiles. Leather and footwear—key MSME-driven sectors and among the largest employment generators—have also received meaningful support through export-oriented measures.

The Government has expanded the list of inputs under the IGCR scheme, enabling duty-free import of inputs for exports of shoe uppers. This addresses a long-standing industry demand and will significantly enhance cost competitiveness and export capability of Indian leather and footwear manufacturers.

Overall, the Union Budget 2026-27 is a balanced and forward-looking Budget, focused on long-term economic strength, investment, exports and job creation, rather than short-term populist measures.

IRF WELCOMES UNION BUDGET WITH STRONG FOCUS ON INFRASTRUCTURE AND LOGISTICS

The International Road Federation (IRF) warmly welcomes the Union Budget and appreciates the Government's continued and strategic emphasis on infrastructure development and logistics efficiency, which are critical enablers of India's economic growth.

Mr. K. K. Kapila, President Emeritus, International Road Federation (IRF), said, "The Budget reinforces the Government's long-term vision of building a modern, resilient and globally competitive infrastructure ecosystem. The sustained push towards highways, multimodal logistics parks, urban mobility, and last-mile connectivity will significantly reduce logistics costs, enhance supply chain efficiency, and improve ease of doing business across sectors."

By Puran Dawar



Chairman, Development Council for Footwear & Leather Industry (DCFLEI)



He further added that increased investments in road transport, freight corridors, warehousing, and technology-driven logistics solutions will not only accelerate economic activity but also generate employment and improve regional connectivity. "A well-integrated logis-

tics and transport framework is essential for India to achieve its aspiration of becoming a \$5 trillion economy. The Budget's focus on infrastructure-led growth is a step in the right direction," Mr. Kapila said.

IRF remains committed to supporting the Government through knowledge-sharing, global best practices, and capacity building to ensure sustainable, safe, and efficient transport infrastructure across the country.

THE BUDGET'S FOCUS ON JOBS, HEALTHCARE, AND SMALL BUSINESSES



This year's Union Budget tries to make daily life a little easier for ordinary families. The government is spending more on roads, railways and housing, which can create jobs and improve travel. Some medicines and healthcare items will cost less, helping families save on medical bills. Small businesses and shop owners will get easier loans, which may improve income and employment. There is no big change in income tax, but rules are being simplified so less money gets stuck in deductions. Overall, the Budget focuses on jobs, basic facilities and steady growth rather than big giveaways, aiming to slowly improve household stability.

Deepak Rajput Gaur, PR Executive

UNION BUDGET 2026 SIGNALS STABILITY AND GROWTH FOCUS



The Union Budget presented on 1 February 2026 highlights the government's focus on economic stability, infrastructure growth, and long-term development. Increased emphasis on capital expenditure, support for MSME and employment generation reflects a growth-oriented yet disciplined approach. The effort to balance fiscal responsibility with economic expansion is expected to strengthen investor confidence. Markets reacted cautiously as stakeholders analysed the policy measures.

Gold and silver prices witnessed volatility post-Budget, driven by changing inflation expectations and global economic signals, reinforcing their role as safe-haven investment options.

Gopal Rajput, Senior Accountant, GSTLab Advisors Private Limited

Budget will give new direction to development opportunities for all sections: Dhami

Union Budget sparks big push for Haryana's growth: CM Saini

Dehradun: Uttarakhand Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami on Sunday praised the Union Budget 2026-27, saying it will provide a new direction to the development of the country and states.

Dhmi also said that the budget will also increase opportunities for all sections of society.

The budget emphasises accelerating economic growth and fulfilling people's aspirations, the chief minister added.

Congratulating Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, Dhami said the budget focuses on farmers, women, the underprivileged, youth, small entrepreneurs, and backward classes.

The budget has made provisions for employment, education, health, tourism, skill development, women's empowerment, industry and infrastructure, which will prove beneficial for the entire country as well as Uttarakhand, he said.

Dhmi said that the budget includes a plan to develop eco-friendly "mountain trails" for Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, and Jammu and Kashmir.

New Delhi: Haryana Chief Minister Nayab Singh Saini on Sunday said the Union Budget 2026-27 will give historic momentum to the state's industry, agriculture and youth power, opening new doors for investment and employment across Haryana.

Welcoming the budget presented by Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, the Chief Minister described it as extremely significant for Haryana's overall development. He said the budget would provide fresh direction and energy to infrastructure creation, industrial growth, agricultural reforms and job generation for the youth.

Saini noted that for the first time in the country's history, the Union Budget was presented on a Sunday, calling it a reflection of the central leadership's visionary approach and determination to move the nation forward at a rapid pace. He said the budget is guided by three key commitments—accelerating economic growth, building people's capabilities and aspirations, and the spirit of "Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas."



The Chief Minister said the total budget outlay of ₹53.5 lakh crore, with capital expenditure raised to ₹12.2 lakh crore, nearly 9 percent higher than last year, would prove especially beneficial for fast-growing states like Haryana. He added that higher capital spending would accelerate infrastructure projects and create large-scale employment opportunities.

Referring to tax devolution, Saini said the budget provides for an additional ₹1.4 lakh crore to states, with the states' share maintained at 41 percent as recommended by the 16th Finance Commission. Haryana, as a major contributor to central taxes, would receive more stable and assured financial support. These funds, he said, would be channelled into education, healthcare, rural development, road construction and other infrastructure projects, improving public services across the state.

The Chief Minister said increased capital expenditure would speed up key projects such as railways, highways, RTTS corridors including the Delhi-Gurgaon-Faridabad route, EV charging infrastructure and Industrial Model Townships. He added that areas like IMT Kharikhoda and Manesar would attract fresh investments, generating jobs of jobs. Enhanced allocations under RIDF and UIDF would further strengthen both rural and urban infrastructure.

Highlighting the focus on technology and skills, Saini said the Semiconductor Mission 2.0 would benefit Haryana's electronics, automobile and manufacturing sectors. He said provisions for MSMEs, startups, IT and biopharma would boost innovation, skill development and employment opportunities for the state's youth.

Calling Haryana an agriculture-dominated state, the Chief Minister said the budget's emphasis on crop diversification, water conservation and higher farm incomes would directly benefit farmers and agro-based industries. He added that initiatives like Haryana's 'Mera Pani-Meri Virasat' scheme would gain national recognition under the new policy framework.

Saini also pointed to the budget's focus on future-ready sectors such as medical tourism, artificial intelligence, carbon capture, container manufacturing and skill development. Measures for inflation control, tax simplification and middle-class relief, along with a new ₹10,000 crore initiative for biopharma and life sciences, would strengthen the state's economy and healthcare ecosystem.

Highlighting the focus on technology and skills, Saini said the Semiconductor Mission 2.0 would benefit Haryana's electronics, automobile and manufacturing sectors. He said provisions for MSMEs, startups, IT and biopharma would boost innovation, skill development and employment opportunities for the state's youth.

Punjab Police conducts 767 raids on day 13 of anti-gangster drive 148 arrested



Chandigarh: Punjab Police on Sunday carried out 767 raids across the state on the 13th day of its anti-gangster campaign and arrested 148 persons, officials said.

The campaign 'Gangstran Te Vaar' is aimed at making Punjab a gangster-free state and was launched on January 20 under the directions of Chief Minister Bhagwant Singh Mann and is being led by Director General of Police Gaurav Yadav.

Police teams from all districts, in coordination with the Anti-Gangster Task Force (AGTF), are conducting special operations across the state.

On its 13th day, police carried out 767 raids and arrested 148 people. They also recovered four weapons.

With the latest arrests, the total number of persons held since the launch of the campaign has reached 4,061.

Police also took preventive action against 178 individuals, while 291 persons were verified and released after questioning. Fourteen proclaimed offenders were also arrested during the operation.

Police urged people to share information related to wanted criminals and gangsters anonymously through the Anti-Gangster Helpline number 93946-93946.

Meanwhile, continuing its drive against drugs under the campaign 'Yudh Nashian Virudh', Punjab Police on the 337th day arrested 73 drug smugglers and recovered 2.8 kg heroin, 252 grams of opium, 386 intoxicant tablets and capsules, and Rs 14,730 in drug money.

With this, the total number of drug smugglers arrested in 337 days has reached 47,355.

AAP slams Union Budget, says Punjab left out yet again

TSN/Chandigarh:

The Aam Aadmi Party in Punjab mounted a sharp attack on the Union Budget on Saturday, accusing the Centre of once again ignoring the state's farmers, youth, industry and overall economic interests.

Punjab Chief Minister Bhagwant Mann said the Budget has no roadmap to address any of Punjab's core concerns and reflects continued neglect of the state.

Reacting strongly, CM Mann said there is no legal guarantee on Minimum Support Price for farmers, no roadmap for employment generation for the youth and no meaningful relief for industry or taxation. He alleged that despite Punjab's significant contribution to the nation, the Centre has taken no concrete steps to strengthen the state's economy, treating Punjab unfairly year after year. Mann added that Punjab is resilient and hardwork-



ing, and despite repeated neglect, the AAP government and the people of Punjab will work together to rebuild and strengthen the state's economy on their own.

Punjab Finance Minister Harpal Singh Cheema echoed similar sentiments, stating that the Budget has once again betrayed farmers of Punjab and Haryana. He said the Centre's claims of being farmer-friendly stand exposed, as there is no increase in the Agriculture Infrastructure Fund

and no focused support for strengthening mandi infrastructure. Cheema pointed out that while the Budget speaks about promoting high-value crops such as coconut, cashew and nuts, it completely ignores the needs of North Indian farmers who depend on crops suited to their agro-climatic conditions. He stressed that Punjab's farmers feed the nation, yet the systems that ensure food security continue to be neglected.

Agriculture Minister Gurmeet Singh Khud-

dian termed the Budget a big disappointment for Punjab's annadatas. He said there is no clear MSP roadmap beyond wheat and rice, no concrete package for crop diversification and no relief for farmers affected by repeated floods.

According to Khuddian, the Centre has once again turned its back on farmers while making hollow promises, despite Punjab's key role in filling the national granary. AAP Minister Aman Arora said the Budget has brought disappointment not only to Punjab but to people across the country. He accused the BJP-led Centre of continuing its step-motherly treatment towards Punjab, noting that there is no provision for any new major project for the state. Arora said Punjab's historic contributions, from the freedom struggle to feeding the nation during crises, have once again been ignored.

Faith, Fasting and Festivity as Lord Muruga reigns supreme on Thaipusam

SIVAKUMAR.N

Chennai:

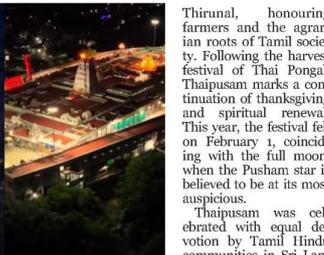
The Tamil world resounded with devotion and spiritual fervour on Sunday as millions of devotees across India and the global Tamil diaspora celebrated Thaipusam, one of the most sacred festivals dedicated to Lord Muruga. Observed on the auspicious Pusham Nakshatra in the Tamil month of Thai, the festival once again reaffirmed Muruga's unique place as the incomparable deity of the Tamils.

From the hill shrine of Palani to temples across Tamil Nadu and beyond, devotees undertook rigorous penance, fasting and padayatra, many carrying Kavadi as an act of surrender and gratitude. In a striking display of faith, some devotees pierced their cheeks and bodies with the Vel,



symbolising Lord Muruga's divine spear and the triumph of devotion over physical pain.

Rooted deeply in ancient Tamil tradition, Lord Muruga occupies a central place in classical Tamil literature and belief systems. According to Tolkkappiyar, Muruga is associated with Kurinji, the mountainous landscape of the ancient



Tamils, and is revered as its presiding deity. While other regions had their own gods, Muruga emerged as the spiritual and cultural icon of the Tamil people, earning the enduring identity of the "Tamil God".

The month of Thai holds special significance in the Tamil Hindu calendar and is also known as Ullavar

Thirunal, honouring farmers and the agrarian roots of Tamil society. Following the harvest festival of Thai Pongal, Thaipusam marks a continuation of thanksgiving and spiritual renewal. This year, the festival fell on February 1, coinciding with the full moon, when the Pusham star is believed to be at its most auspicious.

Thaipusam was celebrated with equal devotion by Tamil Hindu communities in Sri Lanka, Malaysia, Singapore, Mauritius and South Africa, as well as in Southeast Asian countries such as Indonesia and Thailand. In recent decades, the festival has also gained prominence among Tamil migrant communities in Europe, Canada and the United States, transforming it into a truly global celebration of Tamil faith and identity.

Union Budget spurs new hope for MSMEs and textile sector in UP

TSN/Lucknow:

The Union Budget 2026-27 is set to create fresh opportunities for entrepreneurs, artisans and workers across Uttar Pradesh, with a strong focus on strengthening Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises, Khadi and Village Industries, the silk sector, and handloom and textiles. The wide-ranging provisions announced in the Budget are expected to boost employment, attract investment and reinforce the vision of Atmanirbhar Bharat in the state.

A major highlight of the Budget is the proposal for a comprehensive and integrated programme for the textile sector, which brings together key schemes such as the National Fibre Mission, Textile Expansion and Employment Scheme, National Handloom and Handicrafts Program, Textile Initiative and Samartha 2.0. These initiatives aim to increase produc-



tion capacity while simultaneously promoting employment generation and export growth. The announcement of Mega Textile Parks is also expected to open up significant new investment opportunities in Uttar Pradesh's textile and apparel industry, which already has a strong traditional and industrial base.

The Budget provisions are expected to directly benefit lakhs of people associated with MSMEs, Khadi, handloom, silk and textile industries across the state. Officials believe these measures

will not only create new jobs but also provide sustainable livelihoods, especially in rural and semi-urban areas.

Welcoming the Budget, Minister for MSME, Khadi and Village Industries, Silk Industry, Handloom and Textiles, Rakesh Sachan, said that the Union Budget will open new avenues of opportunity for industries, farmers and youth. He highlighted the proposed launch of the 'Mahatma Gandhi Gram Swaraj Path' aimed at promoting Khadi, handloom and handicrafts.

Central Budget sparks new hopes among rural women in UP

TSN/Lucknow:

The Central Budget 2026-27 has sparked new hopes among rural women in Uttar Pradesh. The proposal in the budget to establish Self-Help Entrepreneur 'SHE-Marts' to empower women entrepreneurs is being seen as a major step towards women empowerment in the state.

Through this initiative, rural women will no longer remain limited to loan-based livelihoods. Instead, they will become owners of their own enterprises and write a new story of self-reliance. This budget strengthens the vision of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, under which a massive campaign is underway in Uttar Pradesh to make three crore women self-reliant. 'SHE-Mart' will be community-owned retail outlets developed under cluster-level federations. The objective is to provide women entrepreneurs with an organized, reliable and sustainable platform for selling their products.

Advanced and innovative financing instruments will be used for this purpose, and the central government will implement this initiative on the ground in partnership with state governments.

Building on the success of 'Lakshpati Did', the budget presents a clear roadmap to move women beyond loan-based livelihoods and make them owners of enterprises.

Women-led enterprises will receive support at three levels: markets, capital and networks, which is expected to give new momentum to the rural economy. This budget will further strengthen the vision of Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, under which the largest campaign is being carried out to make three crore women self-reliant in the near future. The government has set a target to economically empower women through self-help groups. Under this, rapid work is underway on an extensive action plan to create one crore 'Lakshpati Did' in a year.

2047 dreams ring hollow as disaster-hit Himachal feels ignored: Vijay Kanav

Rajan Panchhi

Mandi:

Even as the central government projects the vision of a "Developed India 2047," the ground reality in Himachal Pradesh tells a very different story, with the hill state still struggling to recover from the scars left by recent natural disasters. District Congress Committee Mandi spokesperson and advocate Vijay Kanav on Sunday launched a sharp attack on the Centre and the state's Members of Parliament, accusing them of turning a blind eye to Himachal Pradesh's urgent needs in the Union Budget.

Addressing the media in Mandi, Kanav said the state has been going through the weight of devastation caused by heavy rains, landslides and floods over the past year, particularly in the Mandi parliamentary constituency. He said large stretches of roads have been destroyed, bridges washed away, drinking water schemes collapsed



and the livelihoods of thousands of families were severely impacted. Despite this widespread damage, he alleged, the Union Budget failed to announce any special disaster relief package for Himachal Pradesh.

Kanav recalled that before the presentation of the budget, Chief Minister Sukhinder Singh Sahu had raised specific demands with the central government, including the introduction of a green bonus or green fund for hill states, an increase in revenue deficit grants and special financial assistance to help the state cope with recurring natural disasters. He said these demands were

rooted in the reality that Himachal Pradesh plays a vital role in environmental conservation and provides water resources to large parts of North India. "Despite making such a significant contribution to the nation, the state has not received economic support that matches its role and responsibilities," he alleged.

Taking aim at the Members of Parliament from the state, Kanav questioned their silence during and after the disaster. He said the people of Mandi and other affected areas expected their elected representatives to strongly raise the voice of Himachal Pradesh in Parliament. However, he claimed that this did not happen in any meaningful manner. "People are now asking whether MPs were elected only to contest elections, or whether it is also their duty to take the pain and suffering of the public to the floor of Parliament," he remarked.

Jude Bellingham leaves Real Madrid game early with apparent hamstring issue

Madrid: Jude Bellingham appeared to injure his left hamstring and had to be replaced 10 minutes into Real Madrid's home game against Rayo Vallecano in the Spanish league on Sunday.

Bellingham was on his own when he seemed to pick up the injury and quickly asked to be replaced. He immediately grabbed the back of his leg with his left hand before going to the ground. He received medical assistance and seemed emotional as he left the field on his own.

The England international was replaced by Brahim Diaz, who five minutes later assisted in Vinicius Junior's goal that made it 1-0 for Madrid at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium.

A victory will move Madrid back within one point of league leader Barcelona, which won 3-1 at Elche on Saturday.

The 22-year-old Bellingham has scored one goal in his last seven matches with Madrid.

Carlos Alcaraz beats Novak Djokovic to become the youngest man to complete a career Grand Slam

Melbourne: Carlos Alcaraz is the youngest man ever to complete a career Grand Slam after securing the Australian Open title against Novak Djokovic, who had never lost in his 10 previous finals at Melbourne Park.

The top-ranked Alcaraz dropped the first set Sunday as Djokovic went out hard in pursuit of a record 25th major title, but he rallied to win 2-6, 6-2, 6-3, 7-5.

The 22-year-old Spaniard scrambled to retrieve shots that usually would be winners for Djokovic, and he kept up intense pressure on his 38-year-old rival.

Once he secured victory, Alcaraz let his racket slip out of his hand and fell to the ground on his back, putting his hands to his head.

He stayed there for a few seconds before going to the net to shake hands with Djokovic. Both players exchanged a few words and Djokovic smiled as he congratulated Alcaraz.



The new champion then ran to hug his coaches in the courtside chairs and later his dad and other team members in the stands.

Both players were coming off grueling five-set semifinal wins and showed phenomenal fitness, athleticism and stamina for just over three hours in pur-

suit of their own historic achievements.

Neither player was willing to relent on the big points — and there were many of them. In the end, Alcaraz was able to convert 5 of the 16 breakpoints he set up. Djokovic converted two of his six.

Djokovic's push for an unprecedented 27th Grand Slam singles title

has now been blocked by Alcaraz or Jannik Sinner for nine majors.

Djokovic edged Sinner in the semifinals and was aiming to be the oldest man to win a Grand Slam title in the Open Era, but didn't quite make it against Alcaraz.

At 22 years and 272 days, Alcaraz is the

youngest man to complete a set of all four major singles titles. He broke the mark set by Don Budge in the 1938 French championships, when he was 22 years and 363 days.

Alcaraz now has seven major titles — his first in Australia along with two each at Wimbledon and the French and U.S. Opens.

Breaking Time

What to do
Fill in the grid so that every row, every column, and every 3x3 box contains the digit 1 to 9. Every puzzle has only correct solution.

	8	5				3	7
6				5	1		
7	3	4		6			9
	1			7		5	
5	7					1	2
	4		1			9	
8			6			4	7
		1	2				5
4	9					2	6

Solution, Sudoku

1	8	5	9	4	2	6	3	7
6	2	9	7	3	5	1	4	8
7	3	4	8	1	6	5	2	9
9	1	6	3	2	7	8	5	4
5	7	8	4	6	9	3	1	2
2	4	3	1	5	8	7	9	6
8	5	2	6	9	3	4	7	1
3	6	1	2	7	4	9	8	5
4	9	7	5	8	1	2	6	3

TOP STORY

Dear Reader, If you have any news or you have any suggestion regarding our newspaper or you have any problem with any government department, you may contact us on 24 hour helpline no- 0120-4225517, 4241284for Delhi & Ghaziabad (9582310372), for Noida(9818999989), Advertisement (9818799941), Circulation (08586925450)

Readers are recommended to make all necessary enquiries and seek appropriate advice before action on any advertisement and content published in this publication. The printer, publisher, editor and seller of the Top Story do not vouch for any claims. The publication is being sold on the condition and understanding that information given in this publication is merely for reference and must not be taken as having final authority of or binding in any way. We do not owe any responsibility for damage or loss to any person, a purchase of this production is not for the result of any action taken on the basis of this work. All disputes are subject to the exclusive jurisdiction of court and forums in Delhi/New Delhi only.

FOR ADVERTISING IN
TOP STORY
PLEASE CONTACT:
9818799941

Jos Buttler becomes most capped player for England in international cricket

Pallekele: Veteran wicketkeeper-batter Jos Buttler scripted history as he became the most capped player for England in international cricket on Sunday.

The right-handed batter achieved this historic feat during the second T20I of the three-match series against Sri Lanka at the Pallekele International Cricket Stadium.

The 35-year-old surpassed legendary opener James Anderson, who played 401 international matches for the Three Lions. The great cricketer picked up 991 wickets across all formats.

Buttler, who is now ranked first in the elite list, has notched up 12308 runs in 402 international matches across formats for the Three Lions.

In Test cricket, Buttler has made 2907 runs in 57 matches and 100 innings at an average of 31.94. The right-handed batter

has scored two centuries and 18 half-centuries in the longest format.

In ODIs, Buttler has amassed 5515 runs in 199 matches and 171 innings at an average of 39.11. The 35-year-old has made 11 hundreds and 29 half-centuries.

In T20Is, Buttler has scored 3886 runs in 145 matches and 133 innings at an average of 35.32. The wicketkeeper-batter has smashed 1 century and 28 half-centuries.

Buttler, who is a two-time ICC white-ball title winner, is also part of the upcoming ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2026, starting February 7 in India and Sri Lanka.

The Three Lions have announced their squad for the upcoming ICC tournament, with star batter Harry Brook named captain.

The Three Lions will kick their T20 World Cup 2026 campaign off against Nepal on February 8.

India U17 girls gear up for stringent Bangladesh test

Pokhara: India will look to book their place in the final with a game to spare when Pamela Conti's Under-17 side take on a strong Bangladesh side in their second match of the SAFF U19 Women's Championship at the Pokhara Rangasala Stadium here on Monday.

Fielding their U-17 team as part of preparations for the AFC U17 Women's Asian Cup in China later this year, India began their campaign with a hard-fought 1-0 win over hosts Nepal.

Another victory against Bangladesh, coupled with Bhutan failing to beat Nepal in the later kick-off, will confirm India's spot in the title clash.

The Young Tigresses were pushed hard by Nepal, but there were also things that were not so good, which we need to work on. And that is exactly why we are here," she said.

Despite the picturesque backdrop of the Annapurna Himalayan range, the Pokhara pitch conditions posed challenges to India's possession-based style.



"In my humble opinion, neither me being a new coach, the players had a strong desire to do more, and to prove themselves. They are still not fully secure in their place in the team, and they want to show more, which led us to make more mistakes than usual."

"Overall, I am happy because I saw good things. But there were also things that were not so good, which we need to work on. And that is exactly why we are here," she said.

Reflecting on her first match in charge, head coach Conti felt her players were eager but still adapting to her system.

The quality of the ground did affect us a lot. It makes playing with ball control and passing much more difficult. We have technically skilled players, and were superior to Nepal in that aspect, but the conditions definitely played their part," the Italian added.

Attention now shifts to Bangladesh, who stormed into the tournament with a commanding 12-0 win over Bhutan and are expected to provide a sterner physical test.

Conti and her staff even watched their rivals in action to assess their strengths. "I think Bangladesh are a physically strong

opponent. We need to take that into account. I believe that technically, we can hurt them a lot if we work better."

"But at the same time, I always think that there is much more to work on. Whether you win, lose, or draw, you have to come back and say: this is not enough, we cannot be satisfied with what we have."

"And for us, with very little time working together, the players have had to learn a new system of play that we have introduced. We have to improve a lot to achieve results. That means working, especially on the physical side," she added.

Different surfaces, day games in T20 WC are new challenges but we can adapt: Santner

Thiruvananthapuram: Skipper Mitchell Santner said New Zealand will rely on their past experience in the sub-continent and inherent adaptability skills to tame different conditions to come good in the upcoming T20 World Cup.

The Kiwis played eight white ball matches (3 ODIs and 5 T20Is) in India in the run-up to the ICC showpiece, beginning on February 7.

"I guess we've had a few players who played in Chennai recently in the IPL or obviously games throughout our careers. I think the last couple of years have shown that Chennai is a pretty good wicket," said Santner after the fifth T20I against India here on Saturday, which they lost by 46 runs.

New Zealand, placed in Group B along with Afghanistan, UAE, South Africa and Canada, will play three group matches in Chennai and one in Ahmedabad.

In that, two matches will have 11 am starts, while the other games will begin at 3 pm and 7



pm. Santner said the Antipodeans have the wherewithal to rise up to the challenge.

"The day game is going to be slightly different. Guys are going to have to reset their clocks, try to get up a little bit earlier. But again, it's a new challenge for us. We go to Ahmedabad for one game on red soil, then we go to Chennai on black soil, so it's going to be slightly different."

"I guess we pride ourselves on trying to adapt as quickly as we can on surfaces. So, I think, going throughout the World

Cup, we have to adapt to different surfaces. We've got three games in Chennai, so, it might play a lot different to what here, or it could be the same. And if it does, we kind of know how to operate," he explained.

In that context, Santner said the testing T20I series against India which they lost 1-4 will stand them in good stead.

"I think we're obviously tested a lot throughout the series. We knew that was going to be the case. We know how good India are, especially their record at home. But for

us it was a great series, great prep," he said.

"I guess the results, a little bit disappointing, but as a learning, I think everyone, bowlers especially, got a lot out of the series. So if we are to come up against India, or a really flat wicket in India, where I guess 230, 240 might be a good effort," he said.

The New Zealand captain was delighted to see the return of express pacer Lockie Ferguson.

In his first match after a few months, Ferguson had figures of two for 41 and his wickets were Abhishek Sharma and Sanju Samson.

"Lockie has shown his class whenever he plays for New Zealand. Obviously, he's in the franchise stuff as well, but I think for us, making sure he was back ready and fit, ready to go," Santner said.

"We didn't want to push it too early. I guess for his first bowl out, it looked pretty good and was bowling pretty quick. So for us, it's a massive boost," he added.

59th Fit India Sundays on Cycle unites nation from Delhi to Guwahati

New Delhi:

From bustling city roads to college campuses and community grounds, India once again took to the pedals on Sunday as the 59th edition of Fit India Sundays on Cycle rolled out across the country, turning an ordinary weekend morning into a celebration of fitness, sustainability and collective spirit, according to a release.

What began in December 2024 under the leadership of Union Minister for Youth Affairs and Sports Dr. Mansukh Mandavaya has evolved into a true people's movement, with over 25 lakh citizens participating across more than 2.5 lakh locations to date. Rooted in the Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's call of 'Fitness Ka Dose, Aadha Ghanta Roz', the initiative continues to address two urgent national concerns—rising lifestyle diseases and the need for environmentally responsible living. In the national capital, the energy was un-



mistakable at the Dr. Syama Prasad Mookherjee Swimming Complex, where the event spotlighted India's future workforce. Nearly 500 students from ITIs, polytechnics, and technical institutes arrived in cycling gear, riding shoulder-to-shoulder with Fit India Ambassadors Sebastian Mariyanganam Nadar and Neha Tanwar, transforming the venue into a vibrant fitness

hub. Adding star power and inspiration to the morning was Arjuna Awardee and former Indian kabaddi captain Deepak Niwas Hooda, who made a special trip from Rohtak to join the rally. Interacting warmly with students, Hooda spoke about the long-term impact of the initiative on young Indians. "I have come all the way from Rohtak per-

sonally to be part of this movement in New Delhi because it is truly important for the future of our country," Hooda said. "It is encouraging to see so many students joining today. Fitness is the most important aspect of life—just like we realised the importance of immunity during the Covid years. This initiative is giving a powerful message to the nation about health."

Singapore-based Hindus celebrates Thaipusam

Singapore: A Singapore minister was among the thousands of Hindu devotees who took part in the Thaipusam celebration on Sunday, according to a state agency managing Indian temples here.

A 3.2 km procession with the devotees carrying paalkudams (milk pots) set off from Sri Srinivasa Perumal Temple along Serangoon Road in the Little India precinct towards Sri Theandaythapani Temple at Tank Road on the outskirts of the central business district.

Among those who joined the procession that began late on Saturday night and continued through Sunday were Singapore's Minister of State for Culture, Community and Youth, and Manpower, Dinesh Vasu Dash, who carried the paalkudam, and his wife Dr Rathiga Velaitan, the Hindu Endowments Board (HEB) said.

"Walking with them gave me a deeper sense of their experience," Dinesh told reporters on the sidelines, noting that participation had increased by about 20 to 30 per cent this year.

More than 19,000 devotees carried paalkudams (milk pots) on their heads to offer to Lord Murugan while about 350 devotees bore kavadis — elaborately decorated metal structures attached to the body with hooks and needles — as part of Thaipusam celebration.

The minister appreciated the improvements in crowd and queue management at both the temples.

BUSINESS

FLO hails Budget 2026 for women-centric push & MSME-led growth vision

TSN/New Delhi: The FICCI Ladies Organisation (FLO) on Sunday welcomed the Union Budget 2026, describing it as a strong statement of continuity and inclusive growth with a clear focus on women-led development and MSME empowerment. A delegation of FLO members witnessed the Budget presentation live at Parliament, underscoring the organisation's active policy engagement.

Reacting to the Budget presented by Union Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman, FLO National President Mrs Poonam Sharma said the Budget sends a confident signal of credibility and conviction while maintaining fiscal discipline. She said the emphasis on women, MSMEs and manufacturing reflects a long-term approach to building capacity and opportunity rather than offering short-term relief measures.

Ms Sharma highlighted that the Budget's focus on women-led development, especially the creation of a comprehensive care ecosystem,

145 terrorists 17 security personnel killed in Pakistan's Balochistan

Islamabad/Karachi: At least 145 terrorists and 17 security personnel have been killed in the last 40 hours in multiple counter-terrorism operations in the restive Balochistan province, Chief Minister Sarfaraz Bugti said on Sunday.

Bugti, in a press conference in Quetta, said that the bodies of all the 145 terrorists were in the custody of the authorities and their identification process was being carried out.

He said this was the highest number of terrorists killed in less than two days ever since security forces launched a war against terror in the province.

Bugti said that 17 personnel of the law enforcement and security forces were killed while fighting the terrorists at different locations, including Quetta, Sibi, Gwadar, Noshki, Pasi and Mastung.

Earlier in the day, the Pakistan Army said at least 15 soldiers and 92 militants were killed in multiple counter-terrorism operations carried out by security forces.

The army said the operations were launched after militants belonging to ethnic Baloch groups carried out attacks at several locations on Saturday. The army said the militants attempted to disturb peace by carrying out terrorist activities in and around Quetta, Mastung, Nushki, Dalbandin, Kharan, Panjgur, Tump, Gwadar and Pasi.

"Our valiant troops engaged the terrorists with precision and after prolonged, intense and daring clearance operations across Balochistan, killed 92 terrorists, including three suicide bombers," it said in a statement.

"The militants also targeted civilians, killing 18



people, including women, children, the elderly and labourers, the army said. During the clearance operations and ensuing gun battles, 15 soldiers lost their lives, it said. Bugti also told the media that in Pasi and Quetta, the terrorists had used two women bombers. Intelligence agencies had already informed us to expect a

major attack on Quetta and on Saturday night, these militants attacked our security forces, including police and frontier corps soldiers, and also civilians at 12 different locations," the chief minister said. He said two suicide bombers were also killed in Quetta. Bugti said after 41 terrorists were killed in Panjgur and Shaban areas on Friday, the security forces and law enforcement agencies were on red alert.

The chief minister said the most painful thing in the last 40 hours was the killing of five innocent women and three children in Gwadar and also played the video statements of their relatives at the conference. Replying to a question, he said the terrorists wanted to occupy installations of law enforcement agencies and security forces and were being guided by their handlers, some of whom were sitting in Afghanistan.

reciprocally declare other nations' militaries terrorist groups following the United States declaring the Guard a terror group that year. However, it comes as tensions are high in the Mideast as U.S. President Donald Trump weighs a possible military strike against Iran. The Islamic Republic also planned a live fire military drill for Sunday and Monday in the strategic Strait of Hormuz,

premise Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei. "By seeking to strike at the (Guard), which itself has been the greatest barrier to the spread of terrorism to Europe, Europeans have in fact shot themselves in the foot and, once again through blind obedience to the Americans, decided against the interests of their own people," Qalibaf said.

India to buy Venezuelan oil instead of Iranian crude claims Trump

New York: US President Donald Trump has claimed that India will be purchasing oil from Venezuela instead of Iran.

Speaking to reporters aboard Air Force One while flying to Palm Beach in Florida on Saturday, Trump made the remarks while responding to a question on whether China would recover money it had lent to Venezuela in exchange for oil supplies.

"China is welcome to come in and would make a great deal on oil. We welcome China. We've already made a deal. India is coming in, and they're going to be buying Venezuelan oil as opposed to buying it from Iran. So we've already made that deal, the concept of the deal," he said.

There was no immediate reaction from New Delhi on Trump's comments.

India had been a major buyer of Iranian oil until 2019, when imports were significantly reduced following the reimposition of US sanctions on Tehran.

Trump's comments come against the backdrop of US sanctions on

Iran and Venezuela and its pressure on major energy-importing countries to avoid buying crude from nations under restrictions.

In recent years, India significantly increased its purchases of discounted Russian crude, making Russia one of its largest oil suppliers.

The US has imposed 50 per cent tariffs on India, including 25 per cent for its purchases of Russian oil. Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Friday held a telephone conversation with Venezuela's Acting President Delcy Rodriguez, during which both leaders agreed to further deepen and expand bilateral ties.

The Ministry of External Affairs said in a statement that the two leaders agreed to further expand and deepen the India-Venezuela partnership in all areas, including trade and investment, energy, digital technology, health, agriculture and people-to-people ties.

"Both leaders exchanged views on various regional and global issues of mutual interest and underscored the importance of the close co-operation for the Global South," the MEA had said.

Iran says it now considers EU militaries to be terrorist groups

Dubai: The speaker of Iran's parliament said Sunday that the Islamic Republic now considers all European Union militaries to be terrorist groups, lashing out after the bloc declared the country's paramilitary Revolutionary Guard a terror group over its bloody crackdown on nationwide protests. The announcement



by Mohammad Bagheri Qalibaf will likely be

mostly symbolic. Iran has used a 2019 law to

reciprocally declare other nations' militaries ter-

ror groups following the United States declaring the Guard a terror group that year.

However, it comes as tensions are high in the Mideast as U.S. President Donald Trump weighs a possible military strike against Iran.

The Islamic Republic also planned a live fire military drill for Sunday and Monday in the strategic Strait of Hormuz,

premise Leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei.

"By seeking to strike at the (Guard), which itself has been the greatest barrier to the spread of terrorism to Europe, Europeans have in fact shot themselves in the foot and, once again through blind obedience to the Americans, decided against the interests of their own people," Qalibaf said.

Qalibaf made the announcement as he and others in parliament wore Guard uniforms in support of the force. The Guard, which also controls Iran's ballistic missile arsenal and has vast economic interests in Iran, answers only to Iran's 86-year-old Su-

FM proposes rationalisation of employer contributions of PF trusts

New Delhi: Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman on Sunday proposed to rationalise provisions for provident funds or PF trusts by dropping the requirement of parity- and percentage-based limits on employer contributions.

This is done with an aim to promote ease of doing business by streamlining the employers' contributions on behalf of their provident fund accounts.

Presently, there are certain PF trusts, which are recognised by the retirement fund body EPFO and the Income Tax Department.

Besides, he said this will remove legal anomaly with regard to tax breaks on PF contributions by the employers, especially in the higher management.

Higher management officials often used to take big tax breaks under the PF contribution provisions, he explained. The official also said that the new system will provide a framework for



PF contributions by employers, which will not be inferior to the norms of the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO).

These trusts used get the recognition under the Schedule XI relating to recognised provident funds.

The finance minister, in her budget speech, said, "It is proposed to amend Schedule XI to

rationalise the provisions relating to recognised provident funds by deleting parity-based and percentage-based limits on employer contributions, removing salary-linked relaxations and shareholder-based distinctions, aligning eligibility for recognition with exemption under section 17 of the Employees' Provident Funds and Miscellaneous Provisions

Act, 1952, and modifying investment related provisions to remove rigid statutory caps inconsistent with prevailing EPFO norms".

The new system will also put a lesser compliance burden on employers and provide more clarity on matters related to income tax on such contributions, thus reducing the chance of litigation.

Indian plastic processors enhance productivity and competitiveness in both domestic and global markets. The Plastindia Foundation expressed confidence that the Union Budget 2026 will accelerate India's journey towards becoming a global manufacturing hub and reiterated its support to the government in achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat through inclusive and sustainable industrial growth.

As per the Budget 2026-27 document, the allocation for the Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship for the next fiscal beginning April 1, a sharp increase from the allocation made for 2025-26.

The majority of the Skill Ministry's Budget allocation of Rs 9,886 crore has been allocated for the Centrally Sponsored Schemes. Pradhan Mantri Skill Development and Entrepreneurship through Upgraded ITIs (PM SETU), a centrally sponsored scheme, has been provided with Rs 6,140.50 crore. Minister for Skill Development & Entrepreneurship Jayant Chaudhary termed the Budget presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman as "Yuva Shakti-driven" and anchored in the vision of Viksit Bharat 2047.

"A defining feature of this Budget is its decisive commitment to skill development and human capital. The Ministry of Skill Development and Entrepreneurship has received a 62 per cent increase in allocation, with the budget rising from Rs 6,100 crore (BE) to Rs 9,886.80 crore, affirming the government's resolve to place skills at the centre of economic transformation," said the minister.

Plastindia Foundation applauds Budget 2026, sees strong push for Manufacturing & sustainability

TSN/New Delhi: Plastindia Foundation, the apex body representing the Indian plastics industry, on Saturday welcomed the Union Budget 2026, calling it a balanced and forward-looking blueprint that supports economic growth, strengthens manufacturing competitiveness, and advances sustainability.

Reacting to the Budget presented by Union Finance Minister Smt. Nirmala Sitharaman,



Plastindia Foundation President Mr. Ravish Kamath said the strong emphasis on infrastructure development,

Mr Kamath said the Budget reflects a clear commitment to reinforcing India's manufacturing ecosystem through measures that promote domestic production, encourage innovation and improve infrastructure.

manufacturing, MSME support, ease of doing

business and skilling is expected to create a positive multiplier effect across the plastics value chain and downstream industries. He noted that the plastics sector plays a critical enabling role in key segments such as packaging, agriculture, healthcare, construction and mobility.

Mr Kamath said the Budget reflects a clear commitment to reinforcing India's manufacturing ecosystem through measures that promote

domestic production, encourage innovation and improve infrastructure. These steps, he added, will significantly benefit the plastics industry, which contributes to growth across multiple sectors of the economy.

Welcoming the initiatives focused on sustainability, circular economy and waste management, Mr Kamath said these are well aligned with the industry's ongoing transition towards responsible manufacturing,

recycling and improved resource efficiency. He said the plastics industry remains committed to supporting the government's vision of sustainable growth and looks forward to working closely with policymakers to advance circularity and environmentally responsible use of plastics.

Highlighting the continued focus on MSMEs, Mr Kamath said improved access to credit and support for technology upgradation will help

KRK breaks silence on Oshiwara firing incident

Mumbai Actor-producer Kamaal R Khan has spoken for the first time about the firing incident in Mumbai's Oshiwara area. KRK was granted bail on a personal bond of Rs 25,000 after being arrested in connection with the case. KRK, now out on bail, shared his side of the story. While reacting to the police action and the case, he said it is for the court to decide what is right and wrong. He also mentioned that he has been holding a "licensed weapon" for years and has "never broken the law to date." "... The police must have had some doubts, so things unfolded this way. But who is wrong and who is right, I cannot say. It is for the court to decide," he said "I have held a gun licence for 22 years and have not broken any law to date," the actor added. Last week, Kamaal R. Khan was arrested by the Mumbai Police following questioning in connection with the firing incident. According to the police, KRK was initially taken into custody for questioning and later arrested after he admitted during questioning that the firing was done with his licensed gun.

Bruno Mars joins star-studded lineup for 2026 Grammy performance

Washington Bruno Mars, the 16-time Grammy Award winner, has been confirmed as one of the performers for the 2026 Grammy Awards. The announcement was made by the official Instagram handle of the Grammys. Bruno Mars added to an already star-studded lineup that includes artists like Lady Gaga, Justin Bieber, and Rose, Mars' collaborator on the hit track 'APT.' Mars, who is nominated for three awards this year, has secured nods for Record of the Year, Song of the Year, and Best Pop Duo/Group Performance for his collaboration with the Blackpink member. This recognition follows his previous wins at past Grammys, including four awards as part of Silk Sonic in 2022, and his multiple victories in 2016 and 2018, including Album and Record of the Year. In addition to his Grammy performance, Mars is gearing up for the release of his solo album 'The Romanticist', set to drop on February 27, 2026. He will support the album with a seven-month world tour beginning in April. The 2026 Grammys, hosted by Trevor Noah in his final year as emcee, will be broadcast live from Los Angeles' Crypto.com Arena on Sunday, February 1, as per The Hollywood Reporter. The show will feature performances from other major names, including Rose, Lady Gaga, and Sabrina Carpenter, as well as an 'In Memoriam' tribute to influential musicians such as Ozzy Osbourne and Roberta Flack. The ceremony will also introduce a roster of presenters including Harry Styles, Charli XCX, and Queen Latifah.

Ram Charan, wife Upsana Konidela share first post after arrival of twins



Mumbai Megastar Ram Charan and wife Upsana Konidela, who are now proud parents to twins, have shared their first post after welcoming a baby boy and a baby girl into their lives. On Sunday, the actor took to his Instagram account to share an adorable picture from before the birth of their twins. In the picture, the 'Pedli' actor can be standing next to Upsana, who is seen showing her baby bump. Along with the picture, the actor also added a caption that read, "Happy to share that we have been blessed with a baby boy & girl. Having two daughters and a son fills us with immense gratitude. The women in our life have been our greatest strength. I'm very thankful to all our fans, family and well-wishers who have stood by us and supported us through every moment." Hours after the news broke, fans gathered outside Apollo Hospitals in Jubilee Hills, Hyderabad, to celebrate. Many were seen cheering and waiting to catch a glimpse of the family. Ram Charan's father, megastar Chiranjeevi, also arrived at the hospital to meet the newborn twins and bless the couple. The news was first shared by Ram Charan's father, megastar Chiranjeevi, on social media. The actor took to his X account to inform every-

Firing at filmmaker Rohit Shetty's Mumbai home; probe on



Mumbai Unidentified persons opened fire at filmmaker Rohit Shetty's multi-story residence in Mumbai's Juhu area in the wee hours of Sunday, officials said. There were no reports of injuries, and it was not yet known whether the filmmaker was at his residence when the incident occurred, an official said. The assailants fired at the first floor of the nine-storey building at around 12.45 am. At least five rounds were fired, the official said, adding that one bullet struck the glass of a gym located in the building. Security outside the building was stepped up following the incident, he said. "Someone fired on the building. Zonal police and crime branch teams are investigating," the official said. The Juhu police and crime branch team rushed to the spot and launched the investigation. The police were examining CCTV footage from around the building to identify the accused and establish the sequence of events. Forensic science and ballistic experts' team also reached the spot to collect evidence, the official said. The police registered a case on charges of attempt to murder under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita as well as provisions of the Arms Act, he added. Shetty is best known for the "Golmaal" and "Singham" franchises led by Ajay Devgn and for the Shah Rukh Khan-starrer "Chennai Express".



Wanted to be a criminologist before I became actor: 'Daldal' star Samara Tijori

Mumbai For actor Samara Tijori, playing a serial killer in the new series "Daldal" wasn't just another role, it was the fulfillment of a lifelong obsession with the criminal mind. Samara, daughter of popular 1990s star Deepak Tijori, said long before the acting bug bit her, she harboured the ambition of becoming a criminologist. "I wanted to be a criminologist, before I wanted to act. I did a lot of reading about serial killers. I have read 'Mindhunter', 'Sexual Homicide' and a lot of these books. "When I got this audition, I thought, 'This is it, all your studying is finally going to come together.' I was sold, and I left that audition thinking, 'I better get this,'" the actor, who has been garnering praise for her standout performance in "Daldal", said. In the show, which made its debut on Prime Video on Friday, Samara plays the role of Anita Acharya, a journalist who is later revealed to be a serial killer. The character is shaped by childhood trauma and abuse, which drive her, along with friend Sajid (Aditya Rawal), to target



abusers. The series, based on author Vish Dhamija's bestselling novel "Bhendi Bazaar", features Bhumi Pednekar in the lead role of DCP Rita Ferreira. The audition process for "Daldal" was unconventional, said Samara, who made her acting debut with the 2021 Abhishek Bachchan-starrer film, "Bob Biswas".

Won't do propaganda films, pick scripts with conscience: Prakash Raj



Thiruvananthapuram National award winning actor Prakash Raj said he will never do "propaganda films," and that he chooses the scripts because of his conscience. Raj made the remarks during an interaction with the audience at the Mathrubhumi International Festival of Letters (MBIFL) 2026 being held here. The actor said he would never do any propaganda films because "I have some shame left in me." "I do not want to earn money otherwise. No one will now come with such scripts or films to me as they know I will not do it," he said. The multi-lingual actor said that if he does a commercial film, "I will make it a comedy." A known critic of the BJP, Raj alleged that those, including him, who criticise Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Union Home Minister Amit Shah are branded and given names. He said that he has been very clear with his politics, ideology and thought process, thanks to his mentors, teachers and the "great friends" he has.

Salman Khan reacts to trolling of 'Battle of Galwan' teaser



Surat In what appeared to be a befitting response to the ongoing chatter surrounding the trailer of 'Battle of Galwan', actor Salman Khan took an indirect jibe at those who trolled his expressions in the film's teaser. Salman Khan, who was present at an ISPL event, spoke to former Indian cricketer and commentator Mohammad Kaif. In a video shared by official social media handle of ISPL, Salman referred to a particular sequence from the teaser and playfully said, "I'm left-handed, I bat left-handed, I bowl right-handed, and I field with both hands." With a cricket bat in his hand, Salman enacted his act from the teaser and added, "Ab kisi ko yeh samjh aata hai ki yeh romantic look hai. Par Colonel hoon bhैया. Toh yeh, colonel ka look hai, jo samjhta hai apne jawanon ka kaisa hausta de. Main inko bhi who look de sakta hoon, uss look ka koi matlab nahi hai. Aisa hi chalta raha hai, aise hi chalta rahega (Some people see this as a romantic look. But I'm a colonel, brother and this is a colonel's look, who understands how to motivate his soldiers. I can give them the same look, it doesn't mean anything. It has always been like this, it will continue the same way)." The teaser in question came out in December

Julia Roberts celebrates husband Daniel's birthday with sweet PDA post

Washington Actor Julia Roberts marked her husband Daniel "Danny" Moder's birthday with an affectionate public display, sharing a warm post on Instagram. The Oscar-winning actor celebrated Moder's 57th birthday on Saturday, January 31, by posting a photograph of the two embracing. "My fav day. My fav man," Roberts, wrote in the caption. Roberts and Moder first met while working on the 2001 film 'The Mexican' and married a year later in 2002. Over two decades on, the couple share three children—21-year-old twins Hazel and Phinaeas, and their youngest son Henry, 18. Despite her global fame, Roberts has consistently kept her family life largely private, occasionally offering glimpses into her marriage through interviews and social media. In the years since their wedding, the 'Pretty



Woman' star has spoken openly about the importance of affection and communication in their relationship. Ahead of their 20th wedding anniversary in 2022, Roberts said the couple planned to celebrate with "more kissing," adding during an interview, "That's the secret never stop kissing," as per People magazine. Later that year, she revealed on CBS Sunday Morning that she and Moder write letters to each other, and that she

has kept the very first letter he ever wrote to her. She described it as something she hopes to one day share with her daughter, Hazel. Most recently, in a December 2023 interview, Roberts praised Moder as the steady centre of their family. Calling him "the anchor," she said, "It all starts with Danny Moder... the captain of our ship," as quoted by People magazine.